



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of Public Health and Science
Washington D.C. 20201

MAY 30 2006

Arthur W. Bracey, M.D.
Chair, Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite 250
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Dr. Bracey:

I am very pleased with the deliberation of the Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability on the issue of influenza pandemic preparedness. While we cannot be certain when a potential pandemic will affect the nation, we need to consider all aspects of preparedness at this time. Each of your recommendations is being carefully considered within the Department.

As the Nation's Blood Safety Officer, I recognize that blood and plasma products are critical elements of the comprehensive healthcare infrastructure, as are essential personnel to ensure that those products are collected, processed, distributed, and used appropriately. The knowledge gap in assessing a potential influenza pandemic and resolving critical scientific questions is challenging. We continue to work with DHHS agencies to ensure that scientific questions are answered and that adequate global and domestic surveillance programs are in place to protect the blood supply and prevent transmission through transfusions.

I appreciate the role that the AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism has in the blood community. The Department recognizes the importance of the private sector in maintaining this critical element of the healthcare infrastructure and will continue to work with the Task Force to ensure that a comprehensive check list is prepared for local implementation.

Please thank the Committee for their outstanding consideration of an extremely important issue. I look forward to hearing more details of the overall blood preparedness plan.

Sincerely yours,

John O. Agwunobi
Assistant Secretary for Health